

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MILAN 1056

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, PINR, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: CABLE FROM SONDRIO

SUMMARY. SELF CONFIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
IN THIS TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC ALPINE STRNGHOLD AND
THE BENEFIT THEY PERCEIVE IN DRAWING THE COMMUNISTS
MORE DEEPLY INTO RESPONSIBILITY FOR NATIONAL GOVERN-
MENT IS THE MOST ARRESTING IMPRESSION TO EMERGE
FROM A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL LEADERS.
END SUMMARY.

1. SONDRIO, A PART OF SWITZERLAND UNTIL NAPOLEON,
IS ALPINE PROVINCE LOST IN HIGH VALLEYSNBETWEEN
SWITZERLAND AND PO VALLEY. CONNECTED TO ITALY
TO EAST BY ITALY'S HIGHEST PASS AND TO WEST BY
NARROW AND OFTEN CHOKED HIGHWAY ALONG LAKE COMO,
SONDRIO'S MAJOR COMPLAINT IS ITS ISOLATION FROM
ITALY. ONLY TWO HOURS FROM MILAN, IT IS TORN
BETWEEN DESIRE FOR EASIER TOURIST ACCESS AND FEAR
OF URBAN INVASION THAT WILL DESTROY BEAUTY AND
TRANQUILITY OF THIS ALPINE IDYLL.

2. CONGEN CALLED ON PRESIDENT OF PROVINCE, MAYOR,
PREFECT, DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARY, PSI LEADERS,
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AND OTHER OFFICIALS JUNE 16. DC WON 51.1 PERCENT OF VOTE
IN JUNE 1976 ELECTION, UP 3 POINTS FROM 1975.
PCI, WITH GAIN OF 2.3 POINTS TO 19.8 PERCENT DISPLACED
PSI AS SECOND LARGEST PARTY AS SONDRIO SOCIALISTS,
WHO LEAD ITALY IN PSI SHARE OF VOTE, FELL 3.4 POINTS
TO 15.5 PERCENT LOSING ONE OF TWO DEPUTIES. PROVINCIAL
GOVERNMENT RUN BY DC MAJORITY AND CITY BY DC WITH

17 OF 40 SEATS SINCE NO OTHER MAJORITY POSSIBLE.

3. DC LEADERS SATISFIED WITH LOCAL PERFORMANCE AND PLEASED WITH TURNOVER IN PARTY LEADERSHIP. BOTH PARTY SECRETARY AND MAYOR ARE EXPERIENCED PART-TIME POLITICIANS IN EARLY 40'S WHO CLAIM HTAT FOR FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS, YOUNG PEOPLE RETURNING TO DC. COMUNIONE AND LIBERATION HAS ACTIVE CHAPTER. MAYOR, WHOSE FAMILY HAS EHLPED GOVERN VALLEY FOR MANY CENTURIES, SAID DC HAD PASSED ITS CRISIS IMMEDIATELY AFTER JUNE 76 ELECTIONS. AT THAT TIME DC WAS AT BOTTOM, OBJECT OFATTACK ON ALL SIDES, DEEPLY DIVIDED AND DISCOURAGED, IN MIDST OF INTERNAL RENEWAL AND FACED WITH PCI THAT HAD REGISTERED MAJOR GAINS. DC HAD COME THROUGH THAT TURBULENT PERIDO WITHOUT LOSING NERVE OR CONTROL. PCI HAD MADE BASIC POLICY DECISION TO GAMBLE ON PLAYING ALONG WHEN IT MIGHT HAVE TRIED TO FORCE ISSUE WHILE DC GROGGY EVEN IN VICTORY. NOW, TREND WAS ALL UP FOR ITALIAN DEMOCRACY, IN HIS VIEW. EVERY DAY THAT TRUCE WITH PCI CONTINUED, DC GAINED GROUND.

4. THIS ANALYSIS THAT DC BENEFITING FROM COOPERA-TION WITH COMMUNISTS, ADVANCED BY ALL DC SPOKESMEN, WHO ARGUED THAT, IN ANY EVENT, THERE WAS NO PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE. CONSERVATIVE MAYOR, LEFT WING PROVIN-CIAL SECRETARY, AND MOUNTAIN TOWN HEAD CONTENTED IN VARIOUS WAYS THAT PCI, WHATEVER REASON, ACTING LIKE DIFFERENT PARTY. ONE ALLUDED TO DEBATE WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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LOCAL PCI CULTURAL HEAD WHOM HE ACCUSED OF BEING CROCIAN LIBERAL. TO WHICH COMMUNIST AGREED, ADDING THAT NO ONE TOOK MARX SERIOUSLY ANYMORE* IN FACT, COMMUNISTS WERE CLOSER TO DC THINKING THAN OTHERS AND KEPT THEIR PROMISES.

5. MAYOR CLAIMED PCI MUCH INFLUENCED BY ITS NEW ROLE AND DIVIDED INTERNALLY AS NEVER BEFORE. TO DC, THIS RESULT WORTH RISKS OF COLLABORATION ALTHOUGH NO DC COULD AGREE TO PCI MEMBERSHIP IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. HEAD OF MOUNTAIN TOWNS, A SELF DESCRIBED CENTRIST, CONTENTED THAT AIM MUST BE TO DOMESTICATE PCI. HE SAW NO NEED FEAR PCI WHICH ABLE TO PROGRESS ONLY TO DEGREE IT DEMON-STRATES ITS DEMOCRATIC AND NON-SOVIET CHARACTER. REAL INTEREST WAS TO INVOLVE PCI EVER MORE DEEPLY. FOR THAT REASON, HE STRONGLY DISAGREED WITH FORMER SECRETARY KISSINGER'S REMARKS AT WASHINGTON CON-FERENCE ON ITALIAN COMMUNISM. IT WAS NAIVE TO

SUPPOSE, HE SAID, THAT DIALOGUE WITH PCI GAVE IT ANY LEGITIMACY OR ADVANTAGE WITH VOTERS THAT ITS BEHAVIOR DID NOT. VOTER AND PUBLIC JUDGED PCI PRIMARILY BY WHAT IT SAID AND DID, NOT BY FROWN OR SMILE OF OTHERS. ATTEMPT TO ISOLATE PCI WAS COPPING OUT, HE ARGUED, WHEN GOAL SHOULD BE TO HASTEN INTERNAL CHANGE IN PCI BY DIALOGUE WITH IT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MILAN 1056

6. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, IN SHORT, AGREED ON UTILITY OF INCLUDING PCI N RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOVERNMENT AND EVIDENCED NO FEAR OF BEING SUCKED IN. TO CONTRARY, ANDREOTTI AND MORO GIVEN HIGH MARKS FOR SKILLFUL DIRECTION OF PARTY AND GOVERNMENT IN SUPPING WITH DEVIL.

7. SOCIALISTS IN ABOUT EQUAL MEASURE UNHAPPY. THEY SEE PCI AS THEIR MAJOR PROBLEM ALTHOUGH DC IS CLOSE RUNNER UP. LOCAL LEADERS DISSPIRITED BY LOSSES AND WORRIED ABOUT FUTURE. PCI HAD PRE-EMPTED PSI GROUND, FOR WHATEVER REASON, THEY COM-PLAINED, AND LEFT NO ROOM FOR SOCIALISTS. IT HAD DISPLACED PSI AS LEADER OF SONDRIO OPPOSITION, AND WORSE, NOW SNUBBED PSI SAYING THAT IT WAS UNNECES-SARY. MOREOVER, SINCE PCI WAS BEING MORE PAPAL THAN THE POPE, IT MADE IMPOSSIBLE ANY REAL OPPOSI-TION TO DC AND THAT CUT THE GROUND FROM PSI'S THEME OF LEFT ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT. PSI LOSSES IN SONDRIO DUE TO NATIONAL ISSUES, ACCORDING LOCAL LEADERS. PUBLIC VOTED ON PSI AND PCI NATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND THERE, PSI BADLY LED IN CONTRAST TO PCI. SONDRIO LEADERSHIP IS PRO-CRAXI BUT DIS-

SATISFIED WITH NATIONAL PARTY STEWARDSHIP. WHILE
LOCAL LEADERS SAW BENEFIT IN RETURN TO ALLIANCE
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WITH DC, HOWEVER MUCH THEY DISLIKED CATHOLIC HEGEMONY,
SOCIALIST RANK AND FILE WOULD NOT HAVE IT. THEIR
PROBLEM WAS THAT SOCIALIST VOTERS WOULD NOT FOLLOW
LEADERS INTO OPPOSITION TO PCI. RESULT OF PSI
SETBACK WAS PEELING OFF OF VOLUNTEER PARTY WORKERS
ON WHOM SONDRIO ORGANIZATION DEPENDED AND MUCH
UNCERTAINTY ABOUT LONGER TERM SURVIVAL, LITTLE
HELPED BY THEIR READING OF UNE 12, 1977 PARTIAL
LOCAL ELECTION RETURNS.

8. LOCAL ECONOMY DESCRIBED BY ALL AS DEPRESSED
AND VALLEY AS FORGOTTEN BACKWATER. YET, THERE
WAS NO UNEMPLOYMENT EXCEPT AMONG YOUNG SEEKING
FIRST JOB. TOURISM, MAINSTAY OF VALLEY, UP MORE
THAN A THIRD OVER PAST WINTER WHICH, HOWEVER, PAR-
TICULARLY POOR ONE. WHILE LEADERS SPEAK OF AREA
AS DEPRESSED, THAT IS CERTAINLY NOT IMPRESSION OF
VISITOR WHO HARD PUT TO DISTINGUISH VALLEY FROM
THOSE ACROSS MOUNTAINS IN SWITZERLAND.

9. CONCLUSION. SONDRIO IS HARDLY LOMBARDY BELL-
WEATHER, BUT UNLIKE ITS ALPINE NEIGHBOR BOLZANO,
IT FEELS ITSELF ITALIAN AND UNLIKE NEARBY VARESE,
SEEMS TO HAVE FEW REGRETS AT HAVING BEEN SEVERED
FROM SWITZERLAND. IT IS A SMALL ALPINE COMMUNITY,
OVERWHELMINGLY CATHOLIC, WITH LITTLE INDUSTRY,
SUSPICIOUS OF BIG CITIES, WITH GOVERNMENT THAT
RECALLS ATTITUDE OF NEW ENGLAND TOWN IN WHICH PARTY
LINES COUNT FOR LITTLE. IN SUCH A SETTING, CONCLUSION
OF DC LEADERS THAT INVOLVING COMMUNISTS IN RESPON-
SIBILITY FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IS BEST AND, AT
PRESENT, ONLY WISE COURSE, IS NEWS.FINA

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